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Nigeria Expels Missionaries

The Federal Government of Nigeria has ordered the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Northern Nigeria to quit the country immediately. This was reported by the Federal Minister of Internal Affairs to the Nigerian Senate in Lagos. The minister said that the missionaries had asked the government to allow them until April next year to hand over their activities to interested parties. He did not disclose whether this request would be granted.

Missionaries of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk have worked among the Tiv people of Northern Nigeria for more than fifty years with great devotion and self-sacrifice. During that period they translated the Bible into the Tiv language, established an independent indigenous church under local non-white leadership, and founded mission hospitals, leper settlements, teachers' training schools, etc.

When Nigeria became independent last year, the Prime Ministers of both the Federal Government and Northern Nigeria stated that they were sympathetic toward and appreciative of the work of the Dutch Reformed missionaries and gave the assurance that there would be no change in the official policy toward missions.

Although there are still a number of our missionaries in Northern Nigeria, the work as such was handed over to the Christian Reformed Church of America on 1st November. The work done by the missionaries for more than half a century, and the implications of the arbitrary government action, will be outlined in our next issue.

The government decision was announced a few days after the governor of Eastern Nigeria, Sir Francis Ibiam, had made an attack on the Dutch Reformed Church, and on missionaries in Africa in general, in a message to the World Council of Churches Assembly at New Delhi. According to press reports, he condemned the Dutch Reformed Church for what he called its "inherent and studied hatred of the Black man" and repeated that certain governments regarded Africans as "not human beings but slaves for their own benefit and comfort".

Cape Synod Withdraws

The Cape Synod of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk decided at its meeting in Cape Town last month to leave the World Council of Churches. The text of the resolution read: "Though the Synod does not believe that the Church's welfare lies in complete isolation, but that it must continue to seek ecumenical bonds and, therefore, breaks an ecumenical bond with reluctance, it decides under present circumstances to leave the World Council of Churches."

The Synod decided, by a narrow majority, to continue to correspond with the World Council of Churches. At the request of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, of which the Church is a member, it was also decided to make a contribution toward the building costs of the new W.C.C. headquarters, in which the Alliance will be accommodated.

Supporters of the motion to withdraw from the World Council of Churches were divided in their reasons for supporting the resolution calling for withdrawal from the W.C.C. Some felt that membership would jeopardise the proposed union with other Dutch Reformed Churches which had objections against W.C.C. membership. Others, however, expressed disapproval of the basis, composition and trends of the W.C.C.

Two in One

According to Dr. J. C. G. Kotzé, professor of theology at Stellenbosch, South Africa's big problem in race relations is for White South Africans to realise that they have two elements in one nation. He develops this theme in a book which he has written in Afrikaans called "Ras, Volk en Nasie" and published by the S.C.A. Publishers (announced in our October issue).

Professor Kotzé says these two elements, the Whites and the Bantu, are linked under one authority, but differ from each other as far as hereditary racial types and cultural background are concerned. The White man must realise that the Bantu's culture — call it primitive if so desired — must not necessarily be rejected because it does not fit Western standards. Both elements, White and Bantu, form part of a heterogeneous nation. "Thus we must learn to accept each other as fellow beings and as members of the same nation. If we can accept each other daily with this qualification we shall have made tremendous progress already in the sphere of race relations."

The professor feels that this can be achieved without sacrificing one's identity. The building of a nation does not demand such denationalisation. It does not ask for mixed uniformity. But it does mean the mutual acceptance of each other as members of one nation — although we represent different racial types and peoples. "And as each people appreciates its own life and culture within one

nation, without denigrating or disdaining the other, a strong and rich nation can be built from the different peoples."

Professor Kotzé says it is because we confuse the terms people and nation that there often arise emotional arguments against such nation building. People think in terms of admixture, the loss of the group's identity and the decline of the beloved culture of the group. This would be true, he says, where people grow together and develop around a common order of life as embodied in moral, spiritual, political, social and judicial conceptions. Not even the Afrikaners and the English have been able to develop along these lines through the centuries because they lack a common and unifying set of ideals and practices. "Consequently it seems to be completely impossible, in the foreseeable future at any rate, to think in terms of building a people together with the racial and cultural type of the Bantu," he states.

Professor Kotzé says that the Whites and the Bantu must be accepted as similar human beings, but that dissimilarities in abilities, in position, status and life must be recognised and accepted. It is important to realise, however, that backwardness does not necessarily coincide with colour or race. Backwardness is to be found among all colours. "It is necessary, therefore," says Dr. Kotzé, "to see colour and race in our thoughts purely as a biological difference and to realise then that the cultural inequality behind it is not static but can be changed through civilisation and in many cases has been so changed."

Difference in race and colour does not have to cause tension or friction. We find a pointer here, he says, in the spontaneous and easy way of maintaining peace and friendship among children of different groups when they have not yet been indotrinated by the tensions of the parents. "It is the things behind colour and race which create the problems. Thus there are the economic, social, political, cultural and religious relations. It is here that the great difference in dignity enters. Where the non-White in South Africa is generally less developed in these spheres, the sharp contrasts of class distinctions consequently arise which in South Africa are linked with the difference in racial grouping. "In other words, colour is associated with class and merit. It is here that humiliating injustice often occurs."

If somebody's colour is seen as synonymous with backwardness and lack of education, he has no hope or real recognition of his labour, achievements and development in society, unless he also changes the colour of his skin. Then his equality of value is denied on the basis of race and colour. The society which does this, says Professor Kotzé, however difficult its situation may be, has not found a Scriptural solution for its racial relations.

Current Comments

● "By the grace of God I was highly favoured to witness the birth of the Republic of South Africa as a Christian nation, an

event of tremendous significance for Christendom in general, of which I am deeply conscious as a prelate of the Greek Orthodox Church. Therefore the citizenship conferred upon me this day is a privilege both sacred and edifying, which shall be treasured in the name of the Lord who reigneth over all." — The Greek Archbishop of Southern Africa, the Rev. Nicodemus Zaharoulis, on becoming a South African citizen.

● "The words and actions of some African 'freedom-lovers' make an interesting comparison. On the one hand, they complain that the white man has not done enough for African education. On the other, they preserve a masterly — perhaps significant? — silence when the burning of schools deprives Africans of what education has been offered by the white man." — A columnist in The Southern Cross (Roman Catholic).

● "There was a marked difference in approach to the question of publicity between two Dutch Reformed Churches last week. . . . In Cape Town the Cape Synod of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk assembled to debate contentious issues arising from the Cottesloe conference. When it was suggested that the proceedings should be held in secret, the majority of delegates agreed it would be wiser to say what had to be said in public. The Cape Synod was sensible in facing the question of publicity squarely. The debate was serious and dignified. All who took part emerged from the ordeal with honour. The Synod said, in effect 'We have nothing to hide.'" — An editorial in an English-language newspaper.

● "He who thinks that religion is a spent force, and Christianity in particular is ready for the grave, should take a trip around the Republic of South Africa. In the largest cities and the smallest towns his eye will be caught by the slim cement spires of Dutch Reformed Churches. He may not care for their architecture and may decry it as a passing style, he may not understand its symbolism, and may have no sympathy with the ideals that produce it, but in spite of all these negative emotions he will concede the liveliness of congregations that erect such arresting houses of worship." — From an article in the Christian Recorder.

● "The D.R.C. members are solidly good people. And we shall not understand South African affairs until we understand their viewpoint. . . . And surely the Dutch Reformed people who speak thus are right, responsible and Christian in their stress on loving personal relationships, sacrificial giving to spread Christianity deep, and the realistic facing that this will take centuries and must, ultimately, be done by Africans for Africans." — Alun Richards in an article in Church and Community, New Zealand.

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